



FrontLineSupervisor

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A newsletter from the Employee Assistance Program

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<http://hr.dop.wa.gov/eas.html>

■ **We had an employee who was a compulsive gambler and, unfortunately, he lost his job because of absenteeism. When confronted, he always appeared in control. However, he was only in control of his excuses. What more could I have done to help him?**

Although you can't diagnose a compulsive gambler, being aware of signs and symptoms of performance problems can help you determine whether referral to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is necessary. Symptoms of compulsive gambling may include being chronically late for work, unexplained absences or disappearances from work, abusing sick leave, taking long lunch or phone breaks, leaving work early to gamble or meet a bookie, taking vacations at gambling destinations, borrowing money from coworkers and having conflicts with them about money owed to them, family members calling to inquire about the salary of the employee, requesting pay instead of vacation time, stealing company-owned merchandise or property, and falsifying expense accounts.

■ **I'm a new supervisor in a unit where performance evaluations have not been done for several employees. I'm finding lots of performance problems. I'm sure some connection exists between lack of an evaluation and their behavior, but shouldn't self-control reign in mature workers?**

Without an effective performance appraisal process, some employees will gradually demonstrate problematic workplace behaviors that otherwise would not appear. The new **Performance and Development Plan (PDP)** contributes to productivity and positive workplace behaviors. Even the best, most self-disciplined employees benefit from performance appraisals, not only because of the recognition that comes from a job well done, but because of the clarity that comes from providing expected results and competencies and ongoing feedback. Important benefits of the PDP are their contribution to clarifying boundaries and the promotion of an influential relationship between the supervisor and the employee. A meaningful performance evaluation is an important management tool that keeps these boundaries from becoming obscure, the result being diminished authority crucial to the supervisor's role.

■ **What happened to the old Employee Advisory Service. When I called the office, I heard, "Washington State Employee Assistance Program".**

The same program you have relied on has a new name. The Employee Advisory Service has always been the employee assistance program for covered state employees and their families. Now the name matches the service provided. Phone numbers and contacts have not changed, but over time you will see new materials. Handouts and publications such as the Supervisor's Guide and the Guide to Addressing Violence in the Workplace will take on a new look, and be enhanced to meet the re-

quirements of civil service reform. You may already notice our new logo on the Frontline Newsletters and the 2005 Work Record of Attendance, Performance and Conduct. This form will soon be available in an alternate template format to use on your computer. Other changes will be forthcoming to serve you and your employees more efficiently and effectively. Call your regional office in Olympia, Seattle or Spokane if you have questions.

■ **My employee appears arrogant when confronted about performance problems. Although her work issues are obvious, I feel like I am the bad guy when I confront her. I don't think this describes someone who would ever go to the EAP, correct?**

Your employee's response to confrontation may not reflect her interest in correcting her performance or taking responsibility for her problems. You may guess that your employee would dismiss any attempt to refer her to the EAP. However, EA professionals have consistently observed that most employees such as the one you describe will eventually come to the EAP if the progressive corrective action process is used to address job performance problems or behaviors. Continue to refer to the EAP at each step of the process. In fact, the defensiveness you witness may ironically be a clue to her amenability to a referral. She also may feel guilty about her poor performance. You can't tell from her reaction. Her difficulty in accepting your confrontation may be attributed to the work environment, the nature of a personal problem if one exists, her personality, or other unknown factors. Below the surface of her defensiveness, she could be hurting and wanting help for an unmanageable personal problem.

■ **I understand that the EAP follows up on employees who have been clients. Should I refer again if performance problems return? Does this mean I can't take disciplinary action, or should I do both?**

After you refer your employee to the EAP, you should monitor your employee's performance in a way that helps you determine whether the issues that led to referral are resolved. During this time, you may find it helpful to consult with the EAP if performance problems emerge, and you may make another supervisor referral. Whether you take a disciplinary action is a decision that only you can make. The EAP cannot advise or impede your decision. The EAP is always willing to help employees, even if referred more than once, or when formal corrective action has been taken.

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